

NSW Charter Group July 2008 Bulletin

Taking Action

The NSW Charter Group has started a project to encourage the Federal Government to commence its inquiry into protection of human rights for Australia. The Charter Group is also campaigning to ensure that a community education campaign is built around the inquiry to help people participate and make submissions.

Help this campaign by:

- Writing to the Attorney-General, the Hon. Robert McClelland, Parliament House Canberra to give him your support to announce the inquiry.
- Come to the 'Protect Human Rights' training day where you can learn how to share your knowledge about rights and be in a better position to debate the issues. Next workshop is on Friday 29 August, email karen@piac.asn.au for registration form.

Exploding the myths

Read or hear any anti-human rights 'facts'? Check with us for the other side of the story. This is one example.

Nicola McGarrity response to James Allen's opinion piece, (*'Don't entrust liberty to madcap judges', 17 July 2008, The Australian*)

James Allen's article ('Don't entrust liberty to madcap judges', 17 July 2008) is far from successful as an argument against an Australian Charter of Rights. He has fundamentally misunderstood the case on which his argument is based. Allen argues that a recent Canadian case over-ruling a parent's decision to ground their child highlights the 'judicial lunacy' that a Charter of Rights would generate. However, the foundation of this case is not Canada's Charter of Rights. It is rather a dispute between custodial and non-custodial parents about the appropriate way to discipline their child.

Allen says that any judge 'with a brain in his or her head' would have 'laughed this thing out of court' but his argument is undermined by the fact that the Court was merely following the lead of the Canadian Parliament. The Canadian Civil Code specifically allows parental disputes to be referred to the courts. Any 'lunacy' therefore seems to lie with the elected politicians in the Canadian Parliament rather than the courts.

Allen's article does not stand up as an argument against an Australia Charter of Rights. Such a Charter would make a positive contribution to the protection of human rights in Australia and is long over-due.

News

Amnesty International's Report on Eliminating Violence Against Women
In response to the Federal Government's announcement to develop a National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children, Amnesty International has released a report, *Setting the Standard*. Amnesty International will also be holding workshops to assist with making submissions to inform the plan. For more info: <http://action.amnesty.org.au/svaw/comments/14454/>

GetUp's Petition to End Mandatory Immigration Detention
Chances like this don't come very often - The Government has launched an unexpected but long-awaited inquiry into immigration detention. For the first time the Government is asking us for our views. If ever you have despaired at the treatment of asylum seekers, put your name to GetUp's petition submission and help end this ongoing national shame:
<http://www.getup.org.au/campaign/EndMandatoryDetention&id=365>

Events

Susan Ryan, former Cabinet minister in the Hawke Government, and rights activist, on the protection of human rights in Australia
Sunday 3 August, 7.30pm, at North Shore Temple Emanuel, 28 Chatswood Ave, Chatswood, 9419 7011. \$5 donation (free for students & unwaged), supper provided.
Topics include why Australia is the only western democracy without a bill of rights, and the potential impact a bill of rights would have on Australia.

Brett Bowden & Mike Davis (EDS)
Terror: From Tyrannicide to Terror - In Conversation with Paul McGeough
Thursday August 7, 6.30pm for 7pm start, \$10/\$7 conc. At: upstairs @ 49 Glebe Point Road, booking essential: 9960 2333 or
www.gleebooks.com.au/events

This unique collection looks at the landmark events and epochs of terror across Europe, from the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 to the terrorist bombings in London in July 2005 – reminding us that a number of answers to terror and terrorism exist in our past. Paul McGeough was the *Herald's* man in Baghdad during the Iraq war.

Breakfast Forum with David Matas: Preventing Abusive Sourcing of Organs in China

Tuesday 12 August, 6.45am to 8.30am, Darling Harbour Room, Novotel Rockford Hotel, 17 Little Pier St, Darling Harbour NSW 2000.

David Matas is the recipient of the 2007 Tarnopolsky Human Rights Award recognising his contribution to domestic and international human rights. The author of eight books, Mr Matas has a long and impressive track record of advocating for human rights both within Canada and on international level. RSVP by 8 August: Luke Hughes 0425 376 771 or dafoh_au@fastmail.fm

NSW Young Lawyers Seminar

Human Rights and Your Clients: Developments

Tuesday 12 August, 1pm-2pm, at Level 9, 170 Phillip St, Sydney NSW 2000

This seminar examines the impact of human rights legislation on clients and on practicing law at a local level. For more info:

<http://www.lawsociety.com.au/page.asp?PartID=27228>

Protecting Human Rights: Train-the-Trainer

Friday 29 August or Friday 10 October 2008, Sydney CBD

The June training was a great success, with participants reporting many positive and valuable feedbacks. The training is useful for anyone who wants to enter into the debate about effective protection of human rights for Australia or NSW. Cost: \$80 including GST. Course fee includes materials, morning and afternoon tea and a certificate of attendance. Please contact Lizzie Simpson:

esimpson@piac.asn.au or 02 8898 6504

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Training Workshop

The Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission is holding a series of training workshops for individuals, organizations and schools. For more information, go to www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au

Advocacy Training:

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre is currently running a number of training sessions for those interested in participating in effective public advocacy. For more information and a copy of the PIAC training calendar visit PIAC's website www.piac.asn.au/training/ or call Karen on 8898 6503. Upcoming training:

Work the System

Tuesday 12 August, Sydney CBD

This course helps people understand how government and decision making systems work and how to influence decision-making at all levels of the process.

Effective Advocacy Skills

Tuesday 16 September, Sydney CBD

Covers lobbying, negotiation and media skills and strategies.

Advanced Media Skills

Tuesday 23 September or Tuesday 18 November, Sydney CBD

Law for Non-Lawyers

Wednesday 29 & Thursday 30 October